

How-To Help Oregon's Kids Stay in School During the Coronavirus Pandemic

Executive Summary

How can We Keep Kids in School and Safe at the Same Time?

Everything about how Oregon schools operate has changed in the past half-year. The fear and uncertainty brought on by the coronavirus pandemic has been compounded by incomplete and inconsistent information coming from those we have counted on to lead us, but Oregon Department of Education is dedicated to helping parents and student advocates across the state get accurate, timely information, so we can get through this safely.

There are two main ways parents and the rest of the community can take action to help and protect Oregon students, committing to wear masks at all times you will be around anyone who does not live with you and refrain from encouraging or accepting punitive reactions to students who do not fully comply with masking.

Two ways adults can keep kids healthy and in school

- **Protect kids' health by wearing masks diligently and encouraging other adults to mask in accordance with WHO recommendations.**
- **Protect kids' relationship with school by finding nonpunitive responses to mask noncompliance and zoom class behavior.**

Adult masking is important for student health even when we're not talking about the children themselves getting very sick. When a child's parent or other loved one becomes ill with the coronavirus, not only is the caretaker limited in helping the student with school, but the new, mysterious disease afflicting their loved one causes a lot of stress for the child.

Avoiding punitive responses to student mask noncompliance may be a frightening line to walk for many with questions like "how will we make sure kids wear masks if we aren't punishing those who do not?" Data analyzed from across the nation and throughout Oregon state shows that we must find another way to convince students to comply with dress codes and other school safety rules than punishment. Punishment of students leads to more than disruption of education for the noncompliant student and also creates an environment of stress, instability, and judgement that harms all the other students in class as well.

Now more than any other time in our lifetimes, we must remember that we are the adults. The children are looking to and leaning on us.

Interactive materials from the presentation are available [here](#).